

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION
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Testimony before the Government Administration and Elections Committee

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

9:30 AM in Room 2B of the LOB

Good morning Chairpersons and members of the Government Elections and Administration Committee. My name is Glenn Cassis, Executive Director of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) a non-partisan state agency. This Commission represents a voice for the African-American community and accomplishes its mission primarily through research, policy analysis and outreach. I am speaking in opposition to

**SB 28 AN ACT CONSOLIDATING STATE AGENCIES AND ELIMINATING
CERTAIN LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONS**

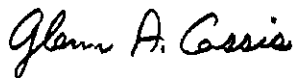
We recognize the severe condition this state finds itself with economic uncertainty and difficulties balancing a budget with limited resources, yet we also realize that disparities still exist. The Legislature appointed the African-American Affairs Commission to state agencies and commissions to provide representation where the voice of an important segment of this state's population has been

absent. Far too many times this Commission is the only representative from the African-American community in the room to provide critical and important data and information to policy makers. This Commission is regarded by citizens of all races as the governmental body they can call upon when they need non-partisan and timely response to questions and concerns. This Commission takes its role very seriously and continues to serve the needs of the Legislature. As a result of the recent national election some are quick to call this the post racial era. A majority of this State's African-Americans would take exception to that premise. In fact many would suggest that African-Americans concerns continue to be marginalized. Removing this Commission from active membership and participation with commissions, agencies and committees would be a disservice to African-Americans in Connecticut. The message the community would hear from you is that all is well. In reality the disparities continue to exist. Through the Commission's efforts improvements are being made and we have begun to document the turning of the curve. The African-American Affairs Commission continues to bring its expertise to the table on health issues, criminal justice, education and law enforcement.

This Commission serves in a myriad of ways to address many socio-economic disparities. While there are other equally important state agencies, coalitions, advocacy groups and partners etc. involved in advocacy that benefit the African-Americans this Commission has a special and trusting bond with the community it serves. First we serve as the agency monitoring, influencing and shaping policy that impacts African-Americans across the state. Second we serve in the unique role of being a bridge between the legislature and the community by presenting issues from diverse group of constituents to the Legislature. Third we serve as a vital resource for residents searching for information on matters pertaining to employment, health, criminal justice, etc. The Commission researches, collects and directs the public to the appropriate sources for assistance.

Much has been accomplished since the creation of this Commission, with obviously more challenges ahead. While we recognize that there is no such thing as a perfect organization we respect and understand there needs to be processes in place to assess the effectiveness and usefulness of any organization. To this end the AAAC, like the other Commissions, is working with the Appropriations Sub-Committee on its Results Based Accountability (RBA) model. This model seeks to enhance the strengths of all the Commissions. It identifies opportunities that must be seized and shortcomings if any that must be addressed. This model allows us to strengthen our mission and obligation to the African-American community for even better outcomes. We have embraced it fully. In view of this any action to eliminate the Commissions is counter productive.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn A. Cassis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Glenn A. Cassis